

California School Nutrition Association

Choose Sensibly: Recommended Nutrition Standards

Child Nutrition Programs, administered by the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), were developed to provide children access to nutritious food and nutrition education during the school day. Meals provided by the National School Lunch Program and School Breakfast Program must meet nutrition standards set by the USDA in order to qualify for federal reimbursement.

It is the position of the California School Nutrition Association that nutrition standards be applied to *all* foods and beverages served on a school campus to support students' cognitive development and to foster and encourage healthy food habits that will last a lifetime.

To support nutrition standards for all foods and beverages, CSNA recommends that:

- ◆ School boards adopt comprehensive policies on nutrition standards, nutrition education, and physical education.
 - ◆ Nutrition standards for foods and beverages be developed and categorized utilizing a food category (grouping) system.
 - ◆ Food items and portion sizes served and/or sold be appropriate to grade level and consider individual needs.
 - ◆ A la Carte foods and meal food items be selected utilizing the concept of nutrient density and emphasizing fresh fruits and vegetables and foods made with whole grains.
 - ◆ Education Codes, regulations and standards that address foods and beverages served and/or sold on campuses be applied regardless of time of day and day of week for *all* foods and beverages served or sold, including but not limited to, school food service, athletic and activity departments, parent groups, student groups or clubs, and classroom activities or parties.
 - ◆ Consequences for any person or group in violation of these regulations be developed and implemented
 - ◆ Nutrition Standards developed be designed for ease of implementation and management by their district.
- ◆ Comprehensive and sequential nutrition education and physical education be incorporated into the curriculum at all grade levels, in order to teach students to make nutritious choices, and learn the relationship between healthy food habits, physical activity and lifelong health.

Calorie intake that exceeds calorie output causes weight gain although very limited research is beginning to question previously held beliefs on appropriate levels of carbohydrate, protein and fat. As a result, these recommendations focus on limiting calories. This practice should meet the needs of a wide variety of food service providers since the tool is simple and easy to use.

These recommendations also support the American Dietetic Association's recommendation that "all foods can fit" and the smaller serving sizes presented provide the opportunity for students to learn "portion sizes". These recommendations (although they do not specifically outline nutrition standards for fat, saturated fat and sugar), IN NO WAY disregard the recommendations presented by the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. All foods and beverages prepared and selected should take into consideration the Dietary Guidelines for Americans. The Child Nutrition Director/Manager is the qualified individual to plan meals and a la carte menus that address both the caloric recommendations and the Dietary Guidelines for Americans.

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Elementary Schools (Schools with Grades 6 or lower)		
Issue	Standard	Rationale
General Statement	Items sold a la carte are intended to supplement meals from school and/or from home, not to compete with the reimbursable meal. Limit sale to one or two items/child.	Children who buy the reimbursable meal receive more nutrients than those who purchase a la carte. Extras consumed may result in rejection of meal items and/or overeating.
Beverages	Beverages sold a la carte may not exceed 150 calories. Water, unflavored Fruit juices, vegetable juices and nectars must contain ≥50 % juice or ≥35% nectar or more with no added sugar Milk, any type, reduced fat No beverage larger than 12 oz, except water No Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value No artificial sweeteners	Beverages should not contain calories greater than a ½ pint serving of 1% flavored milk. Excessive fluid intake results in rejection of other foods that provide required nutrients. Fluid is essential to good health. Fruits and vegetables contain vitamins and minerals.
Snacks Desserts	Snacks and desserts sold a la carte May not exceed 150 calories. Exception: if served that day on a menu meeting nutrient standards or meal pattern for the grade group for the week. No Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value	Snacks sold a la carte are intended to supplement a meal. There are variations in calorie requirements for individuals that justify the availability of items in conjunction with the meal. Extra calories can result in the rejection of meal items and/or overeating.

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Middle Schools (Schools with Grades 6-9)		
Issue	Standard	Rationale
General Statement	<p>Items sold a la carte are intended to supplement meals from school and/or home, not to compete with the reimbursable meal</p> <p>In addition, at this grade level, limited items may be offered for those who choose not to participate in the meal programs.</p> <p>Any item served on the reimbursable meal menu may be offered a la carte in the same size serving as on the meal.</p>	<p>Children who buy the reimbursable meals receive more nutrients than those who purchase a la carte.</p> <p>Extras consumed may result in rejection of meal items and/or overeating.</p>
Beverages	<p>Beverages sold a la carte may not exceed 200 calories.</p> <p>Water, unflavored or flavored</p> <p>Fruit juices and nectars must contain $\geq 50\%$ juice or $\geq 35\%$ nectar or more with no added sugar</p> <p>Milk, any type, reduced fat</p> <p>Other beverages ≤ 25 gm added sugar per 12 oz.</p> <p>No Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value</p> <p>No beverage larger than 12 oz except water</p>	<p>Standards for meals show an increase in caloric intake is approximately 20% between elementary school and middle school. Excessive fluid intake results in rejection of other foods that provide required nutrients.</p> <p>A la carte beverages are not intended to replace a meal.</p>
Snacks Desserts	<p>Snacks and desserts sold a la carte may not exceed 200 calories Exception: if served that day on a menu meeting nutrient standards or the meal pattern for the grade group for the week.</p> <p>No Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value</p>	<p>Snacks sold a la carte are intended to supplement a meal. There are variations in calorie requirements for individuals that justify the availability of items in conjunction with the meal.</p> <p>Snacks are not intended to replace a meal.</p>
Entrees	<p>Entrees not on the menu that are offered for sale ≤ 500 calories.</p> <p><i>Menu planners are encouraged to increase meal entrée choices in an effort to increase participation in reimbursable meal programs and entice students away from purchasing a la carte.</i></p>	<p>The calorie nutrient standard for lunch for this group is 783 calories on average: more for active and male students and less for inactive and female students. An entrée is about half the calories of most meals.</p> <p>Items not offered on the reimbursable meal detract from meal sales, the best source for a healthy diet.</p>

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High Schools (Schools with Grades 8-12)		
Issue	Standard	Rationale
General Statement	<p>Items sold a la carte are intended to supplement meals from school and/or home, not to compete with the reimbursable meal.</p> <p>In addition, at this grade level many alternatives to the meal may be offered.</p> <p>Items served on the reimbursable meal menu may be offered a la carte in the same size serving as on the meal.</p>	Children who buy the reimbursable meal receive more nutrients than those who purchase a la carte
Beverages	<p>Beverages sold a la carte may not exceed 275 calories.</p> <p>Water, flavored or unflavored</p> <p>Milk, any type, reduced fat</p> <p>No beverage shall be larger than 20 oz, excluding water</p> <p>A ratio of 2 to 1 of beverages offered must meet the requirements for middle school with the exception of the size limit</p>	<p>Standards for meals show an increase in caloric intake is approximately 20% between middle school and high school. Excessive fluid intake results in rejection of other foods that provide required nutrients</p> <p>A la carte beverages are not intended to replace a meal.</p>
Snacks Desserts	<p>Snacks and desserts sold a la carte may not exceed 275 calories. Exception: if served that day on a menu meeting nutrient standards or meal pattern for the grade group for the week.</p> <p>Foods of Minimal Nutritional Value are sold only in areas or at times where the meals are not served</p>	<p>Snacks sold a la carte are intended to supplement a meal. There are variations in calorie requirements that may justify the availability of items in conjunction with the meal.</p> <p>Snacks are not intended to replace a meal.</p>
Entrees	<p>Entrees not on the menu that are offered for sale may not contain more than 600 calories.</p> <p><i>Menu planners are encouraged to increase meal entrée choices in an effort to increase participation in reimbursable meal programs and entice students away from purchasing a la carte.</i></p>	<p>The calorie nutrient standard for lunch for this group is 867 calories on average: more for active and male students and less for inactive and female students. An entrée is about half the calories of most meals.</p> <p>Items not offered on the reimbursable meal detract from meal sales, the best source of a healthy diet.</p>